

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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R 120559Z SEP 78
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TO GOV NMI SAIPAN
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AMCONSUL BRISBANE
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UNCLAS CANBERRA 7359

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, EWWT, AS
SUBJ: DETENTION OF M/V FENTRESS UNDER CHARTER TO NAURU PACIFIC
LINES AT MELBOURNE, VICTORIA PORT

REF: GOV NMI SAIPAN CABLE 110521Z SEP 78 (NOTAL)

1. TRADE UNION DISPUTE WHICH IS HOLDING UP M/V FENTRESS IN
MELBOURNE IS GENERAL STRIKE AND NOT DIRECTED SPECIFICALLY AT M/V
FENTRESS. TO GIVE YOU SOME IDEA OF MAGNITUDE OF ACTION, FOLLOWING
ARE EXCERPTS FROM THIS MORNING'S PRESS.

2. "THE CLAMITOUS SITUATION ON THE WATERFRONT IS NOW A NATIONAL
DISASTER, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AUSTRALIA TO EUROPE SHIPPING CONF-
ERENCE, JR. J.I. DAVIES, TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. FRASER, LAST
NIGHT. WATERSIDE WORKERS VOTED YESTERDAY TO BEGIN A STRIKE OF AT
LEAST 48 HOUR WHICH HAS NOW CLOSED ALL MAJOR PORTS AND TIED UP
IMPORTS AND EXPORTS WORTH HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS.
...SHIPPING INDUSTRY LEADERS, IMPORTERS, EXPORTERS AND BUSINESS-
MEN WARNED LAST NIGHT THAT THE STRIKE WOULD THROW SHIPPING INTO
CHAOS, THREATEN VITAL EXPORT CONTRACTS, AND LEAD TO WIDESPREAD
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STAND-DOWNS IN INDUSTRY. MORE THAN 11,000 CONTAINERS ARE ALREADY
HELD UP ON WHARVES AROUND AUSTRALIA FOLLOWING WHARF STRIKES IN
MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY. THE DISPUTES ARE ALSO THREATENING DRIED
FRUITS CONTRACTS OVERSEAS, MEAT EXPORTS AND THE WOOL TRADE. MORE
THAN 80 SHIPS ARE IDLE, COSTING OWNERS MORE THAN DOLS 1.5 MILLION
A DAY...SHIPPING INDUSTRY SOURCES SAID THAT EVEN IF WATERSIDE
WORKERS VOTED TO RETURN TO WORK TOMORROW DELAYS CAUSED BY THE

STOPPAGE WOULD TAKE MONTHS TO SORT OUT AND WOULD LEAVE CARGO
STRANDED AROUND THE WORLD."

3. "THE WHARFIES ARE PROTESTING ABOUT THE SHUTTING DOWN OF 500
MEMBERS OF THE WATERSIDE WORKERS FEDERATION IN MELBOURNE LAST WEEK
BECAUSE OF A STRIKE BY MAINTENANCE WORKERS WHICH HAS LEFT THE PORT
WITHOUT CRANES TO LOAD CONTAINERS. AS THE WHARFIES VOTED TO STRIKE
THE 30 MAINTENANCE MEN, WHOSE STRIKE LED TO THE SHUTDOWNS, VOTED
TO GO BACK TO WORK, PAVING THE WAY FOR AN ARBITRATION COMMISSION
HEARING OF THEIR 17-POINT LOG OF CLAIMS, INCLUDING A PAY RISE OF
MORE THAN DOLLS 45 A WEEK."

4. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT MINISTRY WOULD BE
FUTILE. TRADE UNION DISPUTES ARE A FACT OF LIFE IN AUSTRALIA,
WHICH SITUATION SUMMED UP BY WORDS OF METAL TRADES INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION DEPUTY NATIONAL DIRECTOR, "ALREADY OUR REPUTATION IS
BAD OVERSEAS BECAUSE OF OUR STRIKE RECORD AND THE CURRENT SITUATION
WILL CAUSE GREATER APPREHENSION WITH COUNTRIES CONSIDERING PLACING
FURTHER ORDERS WITH US."
ALSTON

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